



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

March 21, 2016

4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
406-454-5840

Dear Interested Parties,

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) proposes to convert the non-native vegetative structure of a thirty-three acre field on the Marias River Wildlife Management Area to a more productive, native vegetative structure over the course of a seven year period. The proposed project would be initiated this April and completed by the fall of 2022. MFWP seeks your review and comment on our draft Environmental Assessment (hereafter; draft EA) now viewable at <http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicNotices/>. Approximately 18.5 acres of the 33-acre field lies on land managed by the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Through a Memorandum of Understanding both agencies have agreed to pursue the proposed activities with the intentions of improving wildlife habitat and range health.

The proposed project is scheduled to begin this spring and entails using contemporary farming practices and herbicide application to kill out and replace the existing monoculture of crested wheatgrass. Due to the lack of routine disturbance on the WMA, such a conversion essentially aims to return the soil and vegetation composition back to a healthier resemblance of the area in historical times.

MFWP will be the sole sponsor of the project and financially responsible for the costs of such conversion. All material costs will be covered using dollars from the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program as outlined in (ARM 12.9.701 and 12.9.702). If you would like to see hard copies of the draft EA you may request one by emailing fwprg42@mt.gov, calling 406-454-5840 or writing to Region 4 FWP, 4600 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls, MT 59405. Comments may be made online on the EA webpage or may be directed by mail or e-mail to the address above. Comments must be received no later than 5:00PM April 11, 2016.

As part of the decision making process under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), I expect to issue a Decision Notice soon after the closure of public comment. The draft EA would be considered "Final" if no substantive comments are received by that deadline. If a Decision is favorable, the proposed field work will start this spring.

Sincerely,

Gary Bertellotti,
Regional Supervisor

DRAFT
Environmental Assessment

Marias River Wildlife Management Area
Crested Wheat Field Conversion



March 21, 2016



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

Draft Environmental Assessment CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks proposes to convert the non-native vegetative structure of a 33-acre field on the Marias River Wildlife Management Area to a native vegetative structure. Approximately 18.5 acres of the field lies on land administered by the Bureau of Land Management. The project will be initiated in mid-April of 2016 and completed the summer of 2022. Actions include annual treatments of herbicide, the planting of a small grain crop with a no-till drill, leaving a small grain crop un-harvested for one year, and the planting of a 90% native plant seed mix with a no-till drill.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

Montana FWP has the authority to protect, enhance and regulate wildlife use and habitat for public benefit (MCA 87-1-201). The Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program (UGBEP) has provisions for entering into agreements with individuals or organizations desiring to enhance habitat (ARM 12.9.701). Specific UGBEP applications and project requirements are contained in ARM 12.9.701 & 12.9.702.

3. Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is the sole sponsor of the proposed project.

4. Anticipated Schedule:

Estimated Construction Commencement Date: April 2016
Estimated Completion Date: July 2022
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 100%

5. Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township – included map):

Toole County, Township 31 North, Range 3 West, Section 7

6. Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

| | <u>Acres</u> | | <u>Acres</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|
| (a) Developed: | | (d) Floodplain | <u>33</u> |
| Residential | <u>0</u> | | |
| Industrial | <u>0</u> | (e) Productive: | |
| (existing shop area) | | Irrigated cropland | <u>0</u> |
| (b) Open Space/ | <u>33</u> | Dry cropland | <u>0</u> |
| Woodlands/Recreation | | Forestry | <u>0</u> |
| (c) Wetlands/Riparian | <u>0</u> | Rangeland | <u>0</u> |
| Areas | | Other | <u>0</u> |

7. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.

(a) Permits: No Permits Required

| <u>Agency Name</u> | <u>Permits</u> |
|--------------------|----------------|
|--------------------|----------------|

(b) Funding:

| <u>Agency Name</u> | <u>Funding Amount</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
|--------------------|-----------------------|

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks | \$29,364.24 |
|----------------------------------|-------------|

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

| <u>Agency Name</u> | <u>Type of Responsibility</u> |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
|--------------------|-------------------------------|

| | |
|---|----------------|
| United States Bureau of Land Management | Administrative |
|---|----------------|

8. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

The project area lies within the 5,800-ac Marias River Wildlife Management Area in Toole County, MT. Generally classified as a mixture of Great Plains Native Mixed-Grass Prairie, Badlands, Depressional Wetlands and Floodplains, the Marias River WMA contains nearly 14 river miles of the 210 mile Marias River along the border of Toole and Pondera Counties. Habitat on the WMA is described as river bottom dominated by deciduous trees and shrubs, sagebrush-dominated flood plains, shrub-lined coulees and mixed-grass prairies. Because of these qualities, the Marias River WMA naturally provides several of the key habitat components needed by several wildlife species including deer, antelope, grizzly bears, ring-necked pheasants, sharp-tailed grouse, gray partridge and Merriam's turkeys.

Over the years, changes in grazing plans, fire regimes and past agricultural practices within the boundaries of what is now the Marias River WMA have accelerated the encroachment of introduced grasses and interrupted the natural disturbance regimes of the ecosystem. Several remnant fields were planted to smooth brome and crested wheatgrass while other locations have seen a reduction in grazing and fire management. Consequently, several areas have lost plant diversity and habitat quality. In terms of habitat value for game birds, the WMA does contain suitable amounts of both nesting and winter cover; however, it suffers from a shortage of brood-rearing habitat and supplemental food sources from natural or anthropogenic-induced disturbances. Examples of disturbance include grazing, fire, or agriculture.

Since supplemental forage and high quality brood-rearing habitat are most limiting for game birds on the WMA, regional FWP staff proposes to convert a 33 acre field dominated by crested wheatgrass to a new perennial food/cover plot. In 2016, the field will be treated with two applications of roundup (Glyphosate), once in the spring and then once again in the fall. Shortly after herbicide treatment, the field would then be planted to winter wheat for crop in 2017. In order to adequately prepare the field for the grass planting, the field would be left un-harvested from 2017 through the 2018 growing season, but continually treated with herbicide to control non-desirable species. In the fall of 2018, the field will be planted to a perennial food plot mix for stand initiation in 2019. From 2019 through 2022, the field will be mowed and/or sprayed to treat spotty areas

containing non-desirable weed and grass species. It may be necessary to delay activities a year in order to conserve soil moisture in the case of drought.

Regional staff have developed a unique species mix that if properly established, should provide the food and cover qualities needed to benefit each upland game bird species. The mixture is composed of grasses (75%) and high seed-producing forbs and legumes (25%). All four of the grass species are native; four of the herbaceous species are as well. The grasses are bunchgrass species selected to minimize rhizomonous competition for moisture, but also to promote a shaded bare-ground/herbaceous canopy matrix desirable for newly hatched chicks and insects. The selected herbaceous species were selected according to their ability to annually produce high amounts of seed but also because of their relative ease of establishment and overall vigor. Compared to a normal grass planting, the perennial food plot mix will be seeded relatively light at less than 5 lbs/PLS/acre; with the intention to maintain interstitial spaces between individual plants while at the same time maximizing moisture availability and seed production.

The site prep, seed mixture and rotation schedule proposed have been well examined by regional staff. It is expected that a generous portion of time required for stand establishment and maintenance will be offered in-kind by the habitat crew stationed at Freezeout WMA; though, assistance may be supplemented by the team located in Conrad, Montana as well. Each year the field will require routine herbicide treatments and/or mowing to combat weeds and maintain stand quality. During the planning process it was recommended that the first year of site prep (i.e. 2016) be contracted out for initial Glyphosate (roundup) treatments in order to reduce the time and labor-intensive planning processes by the Freezeout WMA habitat crew; such a strategy will also help ensure proper stand quality and establishment.

With private land access diminishing in varying degrees across Region 4, it is becoming increasingly important to pursue opportunities to enhance large blocks of publicly owned land; the Marias River WMA is one such parcel. Enhancing upland game bird habitat on the WMA would no doubt increase bird numbers but also hunting opportunities as well. In Region 4, several major river corridors have been identified as high value ecological areas for pheasants, turkeys, gray partridge and sharp-tailed grouse including the Marias River. Goals for these areas include enhancing critical winter habitat for pheasants and turkeys, maintaining productive nesting cover primarily for pheasants, and also increasing public awareness and hunting opportunities for sharp-tailed grouse.

Presently, all four of Region 4's most hunted upland game bird species occupy the Marias River WMA. To the north, sharp-tailed grouse are thought to flourish off of the higher amounts of native grasses and CRP; whereas to the south, pheasant dispersal northward is likely limited by the geographical features and lack of agricultural disturbances on the WMA. Both sharp-tailed grouse and pheasants and also partridge will benefit from the conversion if properly established. The small populations Merriam's turkeys along isolated locations of the Marias River Valley will no doubt benefit as well. It is proposed that the area biologist, regional WMA manager and staff, and the UGBEP Specialist coordinate on the project. A private contractor would apply chemical treatments prior to seeding winter wheat. We propose to use a no-till drill to minimize soil disturbance from tillage, and reduce costs. Recently, Montana Pheasants Forever Chapters have purchased a no-till seed drill that can be used for this project.

9. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

Alternative B: Proposed Action

10. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

The proposed vegetation conversion would result in minimal disturbance and impacts. Mitigation that addresses the minor impacts is listed below in the Environmental Review Checklist.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

The proposed vegetation conversion would result in minimal disturbance and impacts. Mitigation that addresses the minor impacts is listed below in the Environmental Review Checklist.

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

| 1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure? | | | X | | YES | 1a |
| b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility? | | | X | | YES | 1b |
| c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features? | | X | | | | |
| d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake? | | X | | | | 1a |
| e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard? | | X | | | | |

1a. The use of a no-till grass seed drill to plant a small grain crop and grass mixture and then also the application of herbicide to terminate existing vegetation growth should minimize soil disturbance and erosion to nearly the highest degree possible utilizing contemporary conservation farming practices. These impacts will have negligible impacts to the stream ecology of the Marias River.

1b. The proposed field conversion will likely improve soil productivity, health and quality over the length of the project period because re-introduced native plant diversity will replace the existing non-native mono-culture of crested wheat grass. The increase in ground cover following one year of chem.-fallow small grain crop will likely reduce soil moisture loss greater than if the no action alternative was implemented.

| 2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).) | | X | | | | |
| b. Creation of objectionable odors? | | X | | | | |
| c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally? | | X | | | | |
| d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants? | | X | | | | |
| e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.) | | X | | | | |

| 3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT | | | | | |
|---|---------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity? | | X | | | | |
| b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff? | | X | | | | |
| c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows? | | X | | | | |
| d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body? | | X | | | | |
| e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding? | | X | | | | |
| f. Changes in the quality of groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation? | | X | | | | |
| j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality? | | X | | | | |
| k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity? | | X | | | | |
| l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.) | | X | | | | |
| m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.) | | X | | | | |

| 4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in? | IMPACT | | | | | |
|--|---------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)? | | | X | | YES | 4a |
| b. Alteration of a plant community? | | | X | | | 4a |
| c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species? | | X | | | | |
| d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land? | | X | | | | |
| e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds? | | X | | | | 4b |
| f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland? | | X | | | | |
| g. Other: | | X | | | | |

4a. The proposed action will increase the diversity, productivity, and abundance of native grass and herbaceous plant species on the project site and potentially adjacent land at distances of less than 0.5 miles.

4b Temporary soil disturbance is known to increase the germination rates of weedy herbaceous plant species. The proposed action will likely increase the presence of weedy herbaceous plant species at the site but only temporarily as the proposed action also calls for the routine application of target specific herbicide application and mowing to control and eliminate expected unwanted species.

| 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT | | | | | |
|--|---------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat? | | X | | | | |
| b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species? | | | X | | YES | 5a |
| c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species? | | | X | | YES | 5a |
| d. Introduction of new species into an area? | | X | | | | |
| e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals? | | X | | | | |
| f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species? | | X | | | | |
| g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)? | | X | | | | |
| h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.) | | X | | | | |
| i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.) | | X | | | | |

5a. The project is projected to have a positive impact on the abundance of game birds, white-tailed deer, and non-game avian species. The proposed actions in this EA will have a short term impact on the amount of ground cover but are a necessary means to implement the desired dense nesting cover.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

| 6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT | | | | | |
|--|---------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Increases in existing noise levels? | | X | | | | |
| b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels? | | X | | | | |
| c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property? | | X | | | | |
| d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation? | | X | | | | |

| 7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT | | | | | |
|--|---------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area? | | X | | | | |
| b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance? | | X | | | | |
| c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action? | | X | | | | |
| d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences? | | X | | | | |

| 8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT | | | | | |
|---|---------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption? | | | X | | YES | 8a |
| b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan? | | X | | | | |
| c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard? | | X | | | | |
| d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a) | | X | | | | |

8a. The risk of accidental spill or explosion of herbicide chemicals will be present; however, the risk is very low given contemporary safety measures and training. Tractors, trucks and off-road all terrain vehicles can periodically fail and fuel and or oil spills may occasionally occur; however, the risk is very low given the technology of modern day equipment and contemporary safety measures and training.

| 9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT | | | | | |
|--|---------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area? | | X | | | | |
| b. Alteration of the social structure of a community? | | X | | | | |
| c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income? | | X | | | | |
| d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity? | | X | | | | |
| e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods? | | X | | | | |

| 10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT | | | | | |
|---|---------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: | | X | | | | |
| b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues? | | X | | | | |
| c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications? | | X | | | | |
| d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source? | | X | | | | |
| e. Define projected revenue sources | | X | | | | |
| f. Define projected maintenance costs. | | X | | | | |

| 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT | | | | | |
|---|---------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view? | | X | | | | |
| b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood? | | X | | | | |
| c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.) | | | X | | YES | 11a |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.) | | X | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|

11a. The proposed action may increase the quality of recreation on the WMA due to increased wildlife abundance.

| 12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT | | | | | |
|---|---------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic or paleontological importance? | | X | | | | |
| b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values? | | X | | | | |
| c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area? | | X | | | | |
| d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.) | | X | | | | |

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

| 13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole: | IMPACT | | | | | |
|---|---------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.) | | X | | | | |
| b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur? | | X | | | | |
| c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan? | | X | | | | |
| d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed? | | X | | | | |
| e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created? | | X | | | | |
| f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.) | | X | | | | |
| g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required. | | X | | | | |

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed action has no significant impacts on the physical environment including land, air, water, vegetation and wildlife; or the human environment including noise and electrical effects, land use, health hazards or risks of health hazards, effects on communities, public services, taxes and/or utilities; nor does it entertain potentially significant impacts on cultural, historical or recreational values and/or aesthetic vistas and values. Cumulatively, the proposed action has no potentially significant impacts.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.
- Public notice in local newspapers including Great Falls Tribune, Shelby Promoter, and Valier Valerian.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having only a few minor impacts.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for (21) twenty-one days following the publication of the legal notice on the FWP web page and several local newspapers. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., (21) twenty-one days after the date of the signature on the cover letter accompanying this document.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
514 S. Front Street, Suite C
Conrad, MT 59425

OR emailed to: fwprg42@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

An EIS is not required for the proposed action because the proposed action has no potentially significant impacts on the physical environment or human environment.

2. Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Jacob Doggett, Upland Bird Habitat Specialist
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
514 S. Front Street, Suite C
Conrad, MT 59425

3. List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:

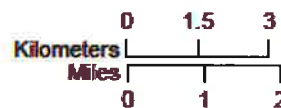
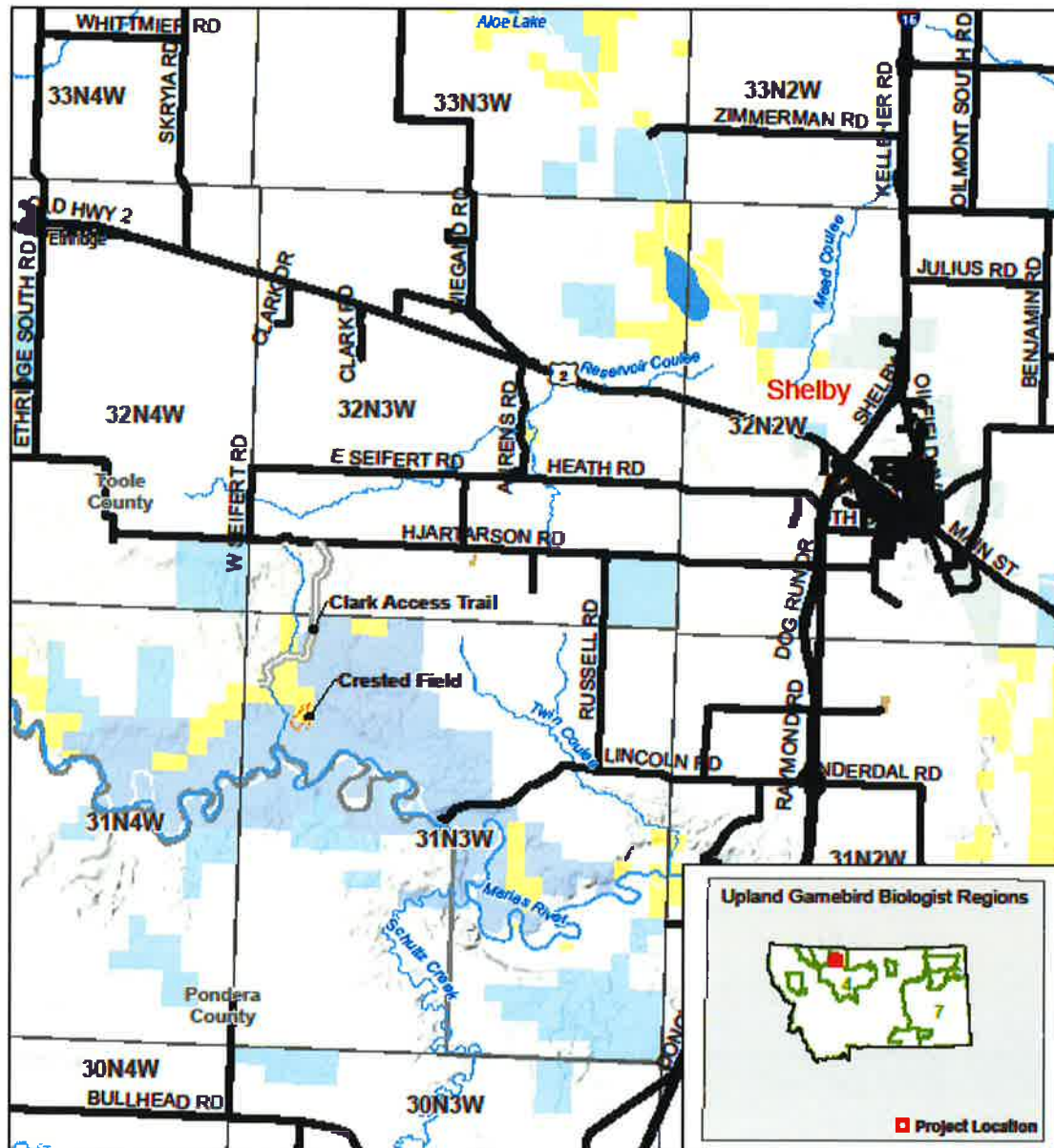
United States Bureau of Land Management
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region 4 Headquarters and State Headquarters

Cooperator(s): MTFWP
County(s): Toole

UGBEP Habitat Site **Marias River WMA Crested Field**

FWP Office: Conrad
FWP Biologist: Jacob Doggett

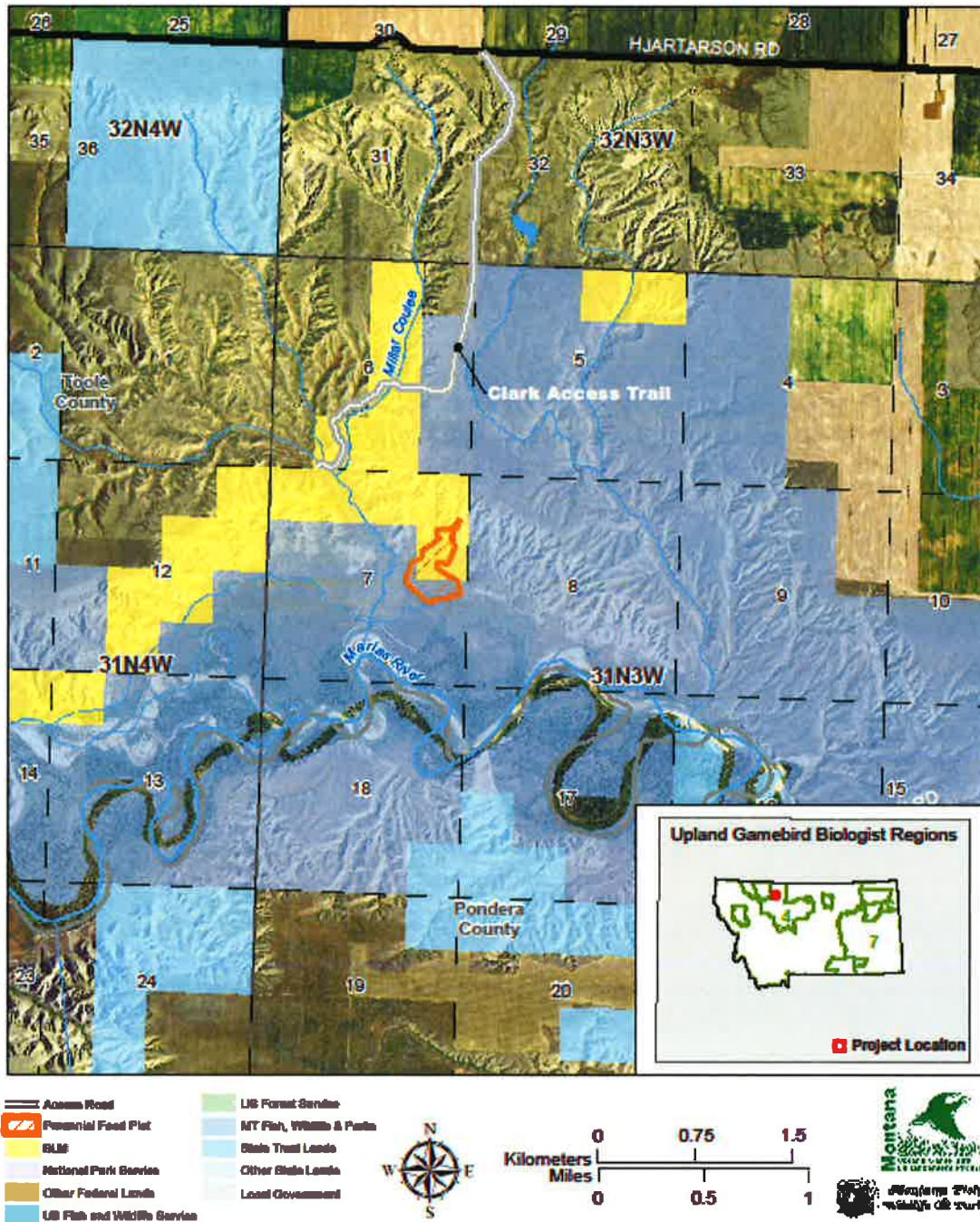
December 16, 2015



Cooperator(s): MTFWP
County(s): Toole

UGBEP Habitat Site **Marias River WMA Crested Field**

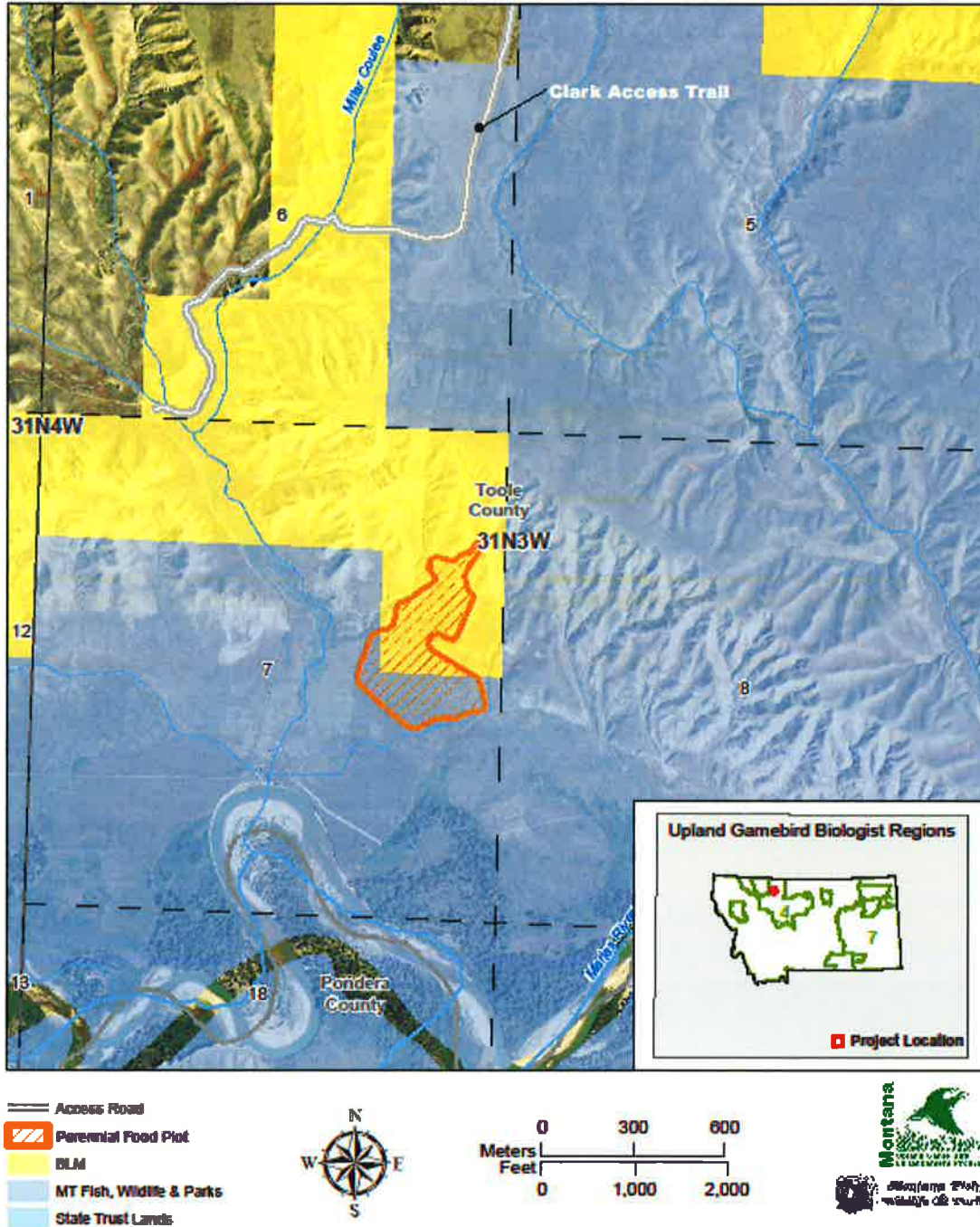
FWP Office: Conrad
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December 16, 2015



Cooperator(s): MTFWP
County(s): Toole

UGBEP Habitat Site **Marias River WMA Crested Field**

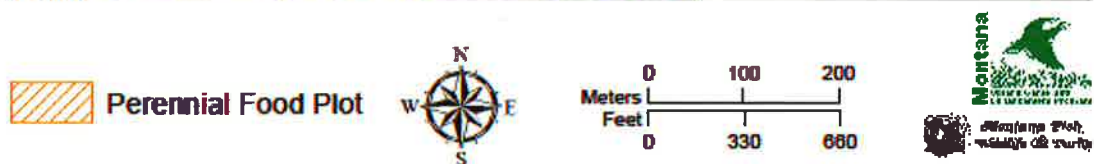
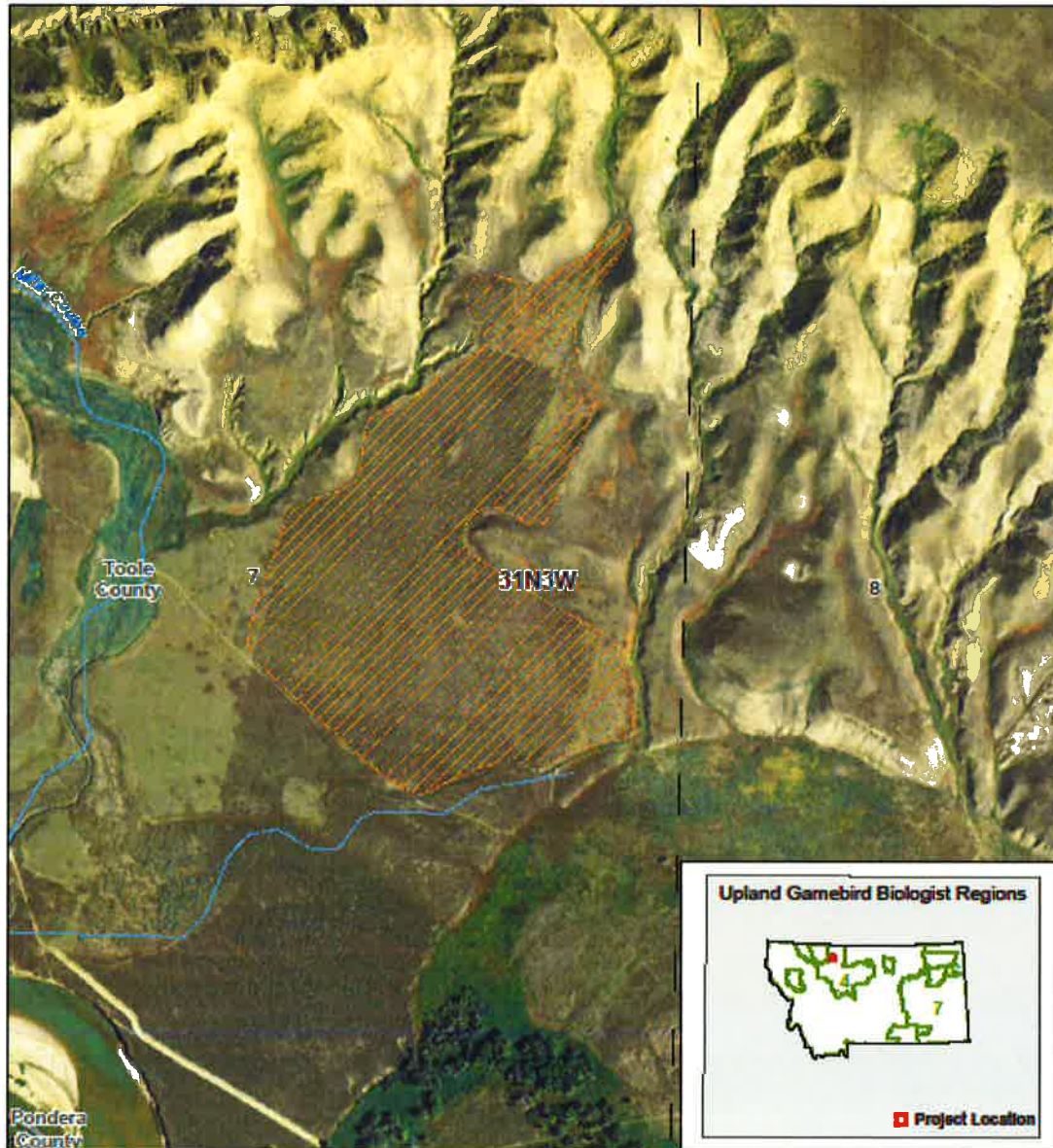
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FWP Biologist: Jacob Doggett
December 16, 2015



Cooperator(s): MTFWP
County(s): Toole

UGBEP Habitat Site Marias River WMA Crested Field

FWP Office: Conrad
FWP Biologist: Jacob Doggett
December 16, 2015



Special Status Species for the Marias River Wildlife Management Area

| Common Name | Species Name | Ranking | | USFWS | Agency Status | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| | | Global Rank | State Rank | | USFS | BLM | FWP |
| Mammals | | | | | | | |
| Grizzly Bear | <i>Ursus arctos</i> | G4 | S2S3 | LT,XN | Threatened | Sensitive | Species of Concern |
| Hoary Bat | <i>Lasiurus cinereus</i> | G5 | S3 | | | | Species of Concern |
| Little Brown Myotis | <i>Myotis lucifugus</i> | G3 | S3 | | | | Species of Concern |
| Porcupine | <i>Erethizon dorsatum</i> | G5 | S4 | | | | Potential Species of Concern |
| Birds | | | | | | | |
| Bald Eagle | <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> | G5 | S4 | DM; BGEPA; MBTA; BCC | Sensitive | Sensitive | Special Status Species |
| Brewer's Sparrow | <i>Spizella breweri</i> | G5 | S3B | | | Sensitive | Species of Concern |
| Caspian Tern | <i>Hydroprogne caspia</i> | G5 | S2B | | | | Species of Concern |
| Ferruginous Hawk | <i>Buteo regalis</i> | G4 | S3B | | | Sensitive | Species of Concern |
| Golden Eagle | <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> | G5 | S3 | BGEPA; MBTA; BCC | | Sensitive | Species of Concern |
| Loggerhead Shrike | <i>Lanius ludovicianus</i> | G4 | S3B | | | Sensitive | Species of Concern |
| Long Billed Curlew | <i>Numenius americanus</i> | G5 | S3B | | | Sensitive | Species of Concern |
| Ovenbird | <i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i> | G5 | S4B | | | | Potential Species of Concern |
| Sharp-tailed Grouse | <i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i> | G5 | S1, S4 | | | | Species of Concern |
| Short-eared Owl | <i>Asio flammeus</i> | G5 | S4 | | | | Potential Species of Concern |
| Sprague's Pipit | <i>Anthus spragueii</i> | G4 | S3B | C | | Sensitive | Species of Concern |
| Fish | | | | | | | |
| Brook Stickleback | <i>Culaea inconstans</i> | G5 | S4 | | | | Potential Species of Concern |